

Testimony on OED

On May 1st 2020 I submitted my initial application for benefits under PUA. As I am a gig worker, I filed under PUA based upon the information provided on the OED website. My initial claim included all weeks dating back to the week ending March 21st 2020. I continued to file the PUA weekly claim every week. On July 21st I was finally contacted by someone from the OED to get my proof of earnings, which I then sent in. Following that call I did not hear anything until late in August when I received a call informing me that I had filed under the wrong thing, that I was eligible for regular unemployment and would need to restart my application. I filled out the contact form on the website and after doing so each day, after a couple of days a lady called me and said it appeared that I had done everything I was supposed to do but I did in fact qualify for regular UI and that she would transfer me over to a "tier 2" so they could get my claim switched over. After sitting on hold for 5 hours and 55 minutes, a man came on the line and told me he would need to restart my claim. So, we went over my earnings information and I answered the rest of the application questions. He told me what my weekly benefits would be and started to discuss the waiting week. I then asked him about all of the weeks I had been claiming going all the way back to March. He told me that he would call me back the next day and we would go through each week all the way back to March 15th 2020. Being that by this time it was right about 5:00 that didn't seem odd. Well Thursday came and went with no call and Friday was the same. I was lucky enough to get through on the phone Monday morning. When the lady came on the line, I explained to her what had been said and she then said she would transfer me to a tier 2 who would be able to back date my claim. After a hold of a little over an hour this time another man came on the line and I explained it all to him. He informed me that all back dating was supposed to be done the same day the switch over occurs. He then proceeded to tell me that I had two options, both of which are unacceptable. Option 1) cancel my claim and wait another 8 – 10 weeks, basically starting over, or option 2) they could back date it but only to the start of this quarter (that being June) which would mean losing two and a half months of benefits I had claimed and am rightfully owed. I could not believe what I was being told. So basically due to improper training and incompetence on their part I am being penalized, either by losing several weeks of benefits or by being made to wait an additional 8-10 weeks, after already having waited months.

I opted to have them cancel, rather than lose two and a half months of benefits, however this further delay has the very real possibility of resulting in my car being repossessed. Being that my ability to earn a living is dependent on my car you can imagine what kind of situation that will put me in.

I just find it very hard to believe that they cannot fix the problem that they created without it penalizing me. It should be bad enough that I and MANY, many, many more people like me are in these kinds of predicaments due to the OED's (what I would call fraud) failure to upgrade their systems with the money they were given a DECADE ago. The OED's gross negligence has negatively impacted thousands of people in an already stressful and uncertain time. Oregonians deserve better!

Carrie Pannell

